

PILGRIM NUCLEAR PLANT

Duxbury Clipper

Wednesday, March 8, 2000

Board Split on Support of Potassium Iodide

By SUSANNA SHEEHAN

Selectmen voted 2 to 1 to recommend funding warrant article 47 for \$5,000 for the stockpiling of potassium iodide pills for Duxbury residents to take in case of a nuclear emergency.

Selectmen chairman John Tuffy and selectman Andre Martecchini voted for the article. Selectman Margaret Kearney voted against it.

Potassium iodide is a proven thyroid blocking agent that taken before or shortly after exposure to radioactivity can prevent thyroid cancer. The money will purchase enough potassium iodide pills to stockpile them in the schools and in

emergency shelters.

In casting her dissenting vote, Kearney called the distribution of the potassium iodide pills "too problematic." She said: "I don't think it's a good policy for this town to undertake."

Martecchini said funding this article would just make the over-the-counter medication easier for residents to obtain and if they didn't want to take the pills, then they didn't have to. "No one is being forced to take this particular remedy," Martecchini said. "I see this as a minimum cost and I am in favor of it."

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According to the Duxbury Nuclear Advisory Committee, potassium iodide is a safe, over-the-counter drug approved by the Federal Drug Administration. It is not sold in stores, although it is available over the Internet. If town meeting funds Article 47, then enough pills can be stockpiled for children in school and for emergency shelters. Everyone must sign a consent form before taking the pills. Parents must sign them for their children in school.

Nuclear Advisory Committee chairman Mary "Pixie" Lampert said she would like town meeting to fund the article at \$8,000 instead, so during the year, the town could hold potassium iodide clinics at which residents could pick up the pills.

"It's not anti-nuclear. It's not pro-nuclear. It's simply an issue of safety like your seat belt or fire extinguisher," said Lampert. "It works. It's safe."

Fire Chief William Harriman, who is the town's civil defense coordinator, is in favor of buying potassium iodide. "It's one more thing in my tool box to protect the citizens

of Duxbury," Harriman said. "It's very critical. I see no downside to it. To me it's a no-brainer. I strongly support it."

Representatives from Entergy, the company that owns the Pilgrim Nuclear Power plant in Plymouth, were opposed to stockpiling the drug because they said it put an "unnecessary burden on the town and schools" and that there was a small liability to the town. They added that the governor's radiation advisory council did not advise towns to obtain and distribute the pills.

Lampert responded by saying the issue of liability was a red herring. "This idea of liability is the bogey man brought out to scare everybody," she said. "It's voluntary. If you don't want your child to have it, fine....The arguments against come from those in the industry who are protecting their reputations."

In Massachusetts, all emergency workers and institutionalized people, such as those in prison or nursing homes, are given potassium iodide during a nuclear emergency.

Research about potassium iodide is available for review in the library.